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Sellers, Jefferey M., Marta Arretche, Daniel Kubler, and Eran Razin, eds., *Inequality and Governance in the Metropolis: Place Equality Regimes and Fiscal Choices in Eleven Countries* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017). 278 pp. \$139.99 (hardback); \$109...

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*Sellers, Jefferey M., Marta Arretche, Daniel Kubler, and
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Place Equality Regimes and Fiscal Choices in Eleven Countries
(London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017). 278 pp.
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This ambitious collection reaches far and wide in its analysis of how governance strategies and institutions at multiple levels of governance (what the book labels “place equality regimes”) address disparities between local jurisdictions within metropolitan regions. Observing that analytical approaches to territorial policies have typically focused on variations across regions rather than within them, the authors position the metropolitan region as a “distinctive type of territorial context for spatial inequality and efforts to address it” (3). Rather than a passive conduit through which national policies flow, this book emphasizes the metropolitan region as a semi-independent, active, and causative arena through which policies impact the magnitude of interlocal fiscal and sociospatial inequalities. Public policies examined in this empirical work include redistributive services, such as education, health, and welfare; allocational services, such as cultural and environmental amenities and security; developmental policies, such as transportation and infrastructure; revenue-raising policies; and regulatory programs with impacts on local social composition, such as housing and land use. The book investigates, comparatively, how such policies enacted at metropolitan and national levels impact spatial inequalities within metropolitan areas—more specifically, differentials in taxing, spending capacities, and public services across localities of a metropolitan area.

Both the book’s rewards and liabilities are functions of its broad reach and impressive scope. The book focuses on the metropolitan region as its key unit of analysis and on how what goes on at this level—in terms of revenue redistribution and regulation by supramunicipal governments—either reinforces or mitigates interjurisdictional spatial inequality. The book admirably examines in detail 11 countries, including developed and developing countries on five continents. This presents a formidable challenge of coordination and synthesis, one which the editors are mostly successful in meeting. The countries are Brazil, Canada, Czech Republic, France, India, Israel, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States. It classifies types of “place equality regimes” operating at the metropolitan scale—“partial Tieboutian” where local choices, revenues, and services influence sorting and higher levels of government are mostly silent on redistributive and regulatory matters dealing with municipalities (United States and India); “partial equalization” that combines some redistribution of revenues with elements of local choice (found in both the federalist countries of Brazil, Canada, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, and the unitary states of France and Israel); and “full equalization/compensatory,” which assures equal services or taxation regardless of place, where there is redistribution of revenues among places and where equalization is emphasized at the expense

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of local autonomy (Czech Republic and Sweden). Presented in each of the country-specific chapters are detailed tables and multiple regression analyses explaining interlocal inequalities in socioeconomic hardship, revenue-raising ability, and expenditures per capita on the basis of metropolitan characteristics such as degree of average income; political fragmentation; and degree of intergovernmental transfers in redistribution, allocation, and developmental policy spheres. The Gini coefficient is heavily used as the main method of measuring interlocal fiscal, public service, and socioeconomic disparities.

This book is the third collective publication as part of a 15-year International Metropolitan Observatory (IMO) research program (see Hoffman-Martinot and Sellers [2005], which examined metropolitan social and spatial structures, and Sellers et al. [2013], which explored how these structures shaped political participation and partisan preferences by residents). As such, reading *Inequality and Governance in the Metropolis* feels like joining an ongoing conversation midstream. Advantages of this collaborative momentum are that concepts and measures that are used feel like they have been well discussed and debated by multiple participants through the life of the research program; in addition, the achievement of analytic consistency across such diverse settings has clearly been a benefit of intense collaborative research deliberations over an extended period. Problematic to joining this conversation midstream, however, is that the editors often assume significant background knowledge on the part of the reader. The important comparative tables of metropolitan spatial inequality data are frequently left to do too much work on their own and need to be supported by a more detailed explanation in the text. The use by the authors of important metropolitan measures (such as geopolitical fragmentation, polarization, and concentration indices) and the use of the Gini coefficient to measure interlocal disparities is frequently accompanied by footnotes referencing past work by the research team or other sources in the research literature, rather than being more fully elucidated in terms of their measurement and interpretation. A table summarizing how each of these indicators was operationalized would have been helpful to a reader not already familiar with these measures. In some chapters, the text summarizes contrasts in interlocal disparities within and across metropolitan areas that are not clearly illuminated in detail in the empirically packed chapters; this presents a challenge to the reader trying to make sense of the voluminous data presented. The work is also handicapped by a rather spare index, particularly unfortunate in a work of such empirical and conceptual depth.

Notwithstanding these challenges of analytical density facing the reader, this volume is well worth the effort; the reader will gain a rich understanding of

the complex metropolitan institutional environment across diverse national governmental settings and cultural traditions. The research team takes on this diverse governmental landscape head on, classifying (all in one table!) each of the 11 countries in terms of the nature of its welfare state, the quality of its capitalism, whether it is federalist or unitary, and the degree of supralocal supervision. The contributors are consistently cognizant of how these larger attributes of national governmental context influence the quality and reach of place equality regimes vis-à-vis the redistribution and regulation of intermunicipal spatial inequalities. The book effectively shows how the redistributive and regulatory policies of place equality regimes are often a composite of actions that both emerge within metropolitan regions and are also a result of national- or intermediate-level schemes. The authors successfully make the case that, while the addressing of interlocal inequality at the metropolitan level is influenced by how central-local relations are structured in a country, at the same time, intrametropolitan inequalities are also impacted by place equality policies enacted at national, regional, and metropolitan levels that are not simply derivative of the larger central-local structural context. For example, although literature has coupled federal systems of government with Tieboutian markets among subnational levels, the finding in this book of redistributive national transfer schemes in Brazil, Spain, and India shows that federalism can be associated with partial equalization policies that temper local policy autonomy. Place equality regimes are not fully subordinate to the structure of central-local relations and include a horizontal spatial dimension where diverse mechanisms are able to operate to reduce disparities in public goods and services across local units in metropolitan regions.

The concluding chapter by the book's four coauthors (who are based in the United States, Brazil, Switzerland, and Israel) largely succeeds in summarizing the diverse, and at times partially contradictory, findings from the 11 countries. Tables 13.2 and 13.3 provide useful summaries of the major characteristics and contrasts found between the 11 countries. Place equality regimes vary significantly across the countries. In most cases, the authors observe not pure cases of Tieboutian or full equalization models but rather a mix or hybridity that combines some commitment to achieving interlocal equality while maintaining a degree of local autonomy. Different levels of interlocal equality, the authors summarize, "do not entail a uniform trade-off between local autonomy and control from above" (257). Of the 11 cases, 7 examined fall in this partial equilibrium classification, while even cases classified as Tieboutian have some elements of equalization in them (e.g., educational compensatory aid in the case of California, USA). The authors conclude that place

equality regimes at the metropolitan level are a distinct component of modern states, that there is a growing convergence across diverse national traditions in efforts to directly moderate interlocal disparities in taxes, spending capacities, and public services, and indirectly disparities in resident well-being. Furthermore, place equality regimes are not the product of short-term exchanges among politicians seeking electoral rewards but are rather the result of long-term historical trajectories of policy and institutional development.

This ambitious work is noteworthy for its concerted effort at comparing complex intergovernmental structures and relations across widely diverse national settings. It is successful in illuminating the importance of examining metropolitan-level dynamics as offering a key set of causal variables that can explain the degree of interlocal inequalities. The book will offer significant insights, and also raise interesting questions, for scholars of comparative political economy

and institutions, intergovernmental relations, and metropolitan governance. It will be of particular value for those interested in how national traditions and societal inequalities get transmitted through, and can be affected by, metropolitan institutions and policies in ways that reduce or reinforce interlocal fiscal and sociospatial inequalities. The fundamental challenge of accommodating greater interlocal equity with local autonomy remains an ongoing, evolving, and significant project across dissimilar national settings.

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